

VIRGINIA

WILDLIFE

AUGUST 1995

ONE DOLLAR



VIRGINIA

WILDLIFE



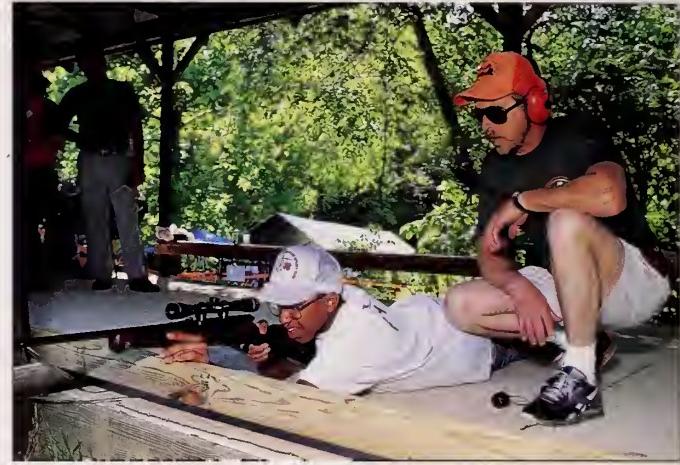
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VDGIF sponsors a Hunter Education Championship each year where youths show off their honed sportsman skills, participating in shotgun, archery, orienteering, rifle, and other events. Story on page 4. Photo © Dwight Dyke.

Cover: Story on resident goose season, page 21.

Photo by Leonard Lee Rue III

Back cover: Brook Trout, photo by Doug Stamm.

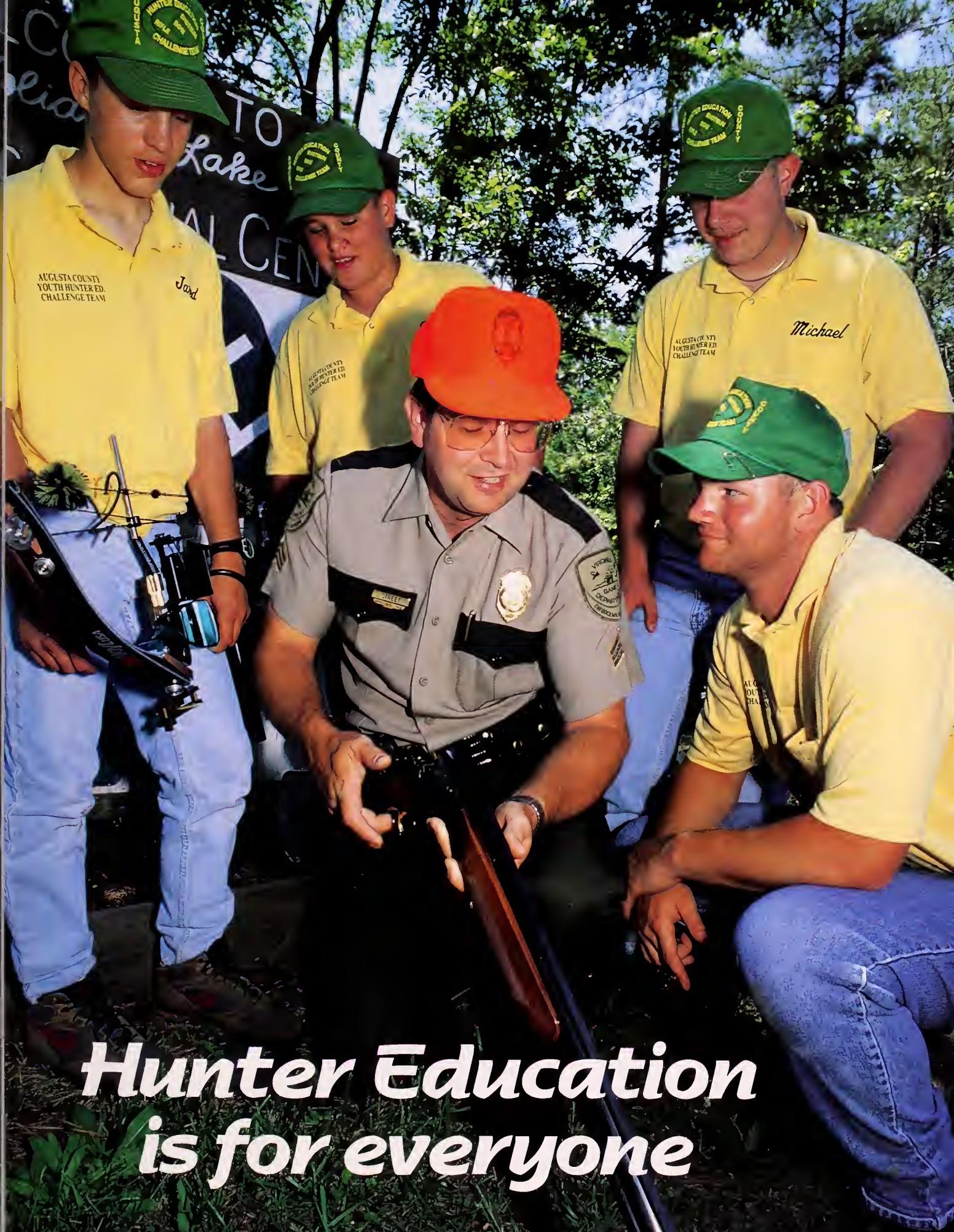
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Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources



Hunter Education
is for everyone



From the Director

The Olympics, The World Series, The Americas Cup, are all symbols of the highest achievement in sporting competition. On May 20 I had the privilege of attending what has become a similar pinnacle for young hunters and their instructors in Virginia, the annual Hunter Education Championships held at Holiday Lake 4H Education Center.

Teams of young hunters from across the Commonwealth, representing some of the finest young graduates of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Hunter Education program, gathered to

compete for recognition as the best hunter education students in the state. It was particularly gratifying to see so many determined youngsters hailing from rural, suburban and urban backgrounds, striving so their team would shoot the straightest, identify all the animals correctly, walk the trail and make the fewest mistakes in safety and outdoor ethics. Their jaws were as set and determined as those of Olympic athletes, and each was enjoying the camaraderie of the event, basking in the knowledge that they excelled in learning important hunting skills.

Here in Virginia we need hunters who are committed to the highest standards of hunting ethics. Not only young hunters, but everyone who goes afield, needs to be the best they can be. Since the early



William L. Woodfin, Jr.
Director VDGIF

In the 1960s the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has been helping Virginia hunters learn how to do that through Hunter Education.



nis, swimming, skateboarding and bicycling, our goal must be to eliminate hunting accidents, and that's where the Hunter Education Course comes in.

However, Hunter Education goes beyond the realm of safety statistics—it's more than 400 annual hunter safety classes held statewide. The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries offers the opportunity to learn the basic ethics and skills for a successful outdoor experience, even if game is not harvested. In Hunter Education students learn:

- How to read a map and use a compass.
- Appreciation of wildlife, basics of wildlife management and wildlife identification.
- Basic outdoor ethics; how to use sound judgment and to make good decisions.
- Proper respect for the tools and weapons of hunting, and how to use them appropriately and safely.

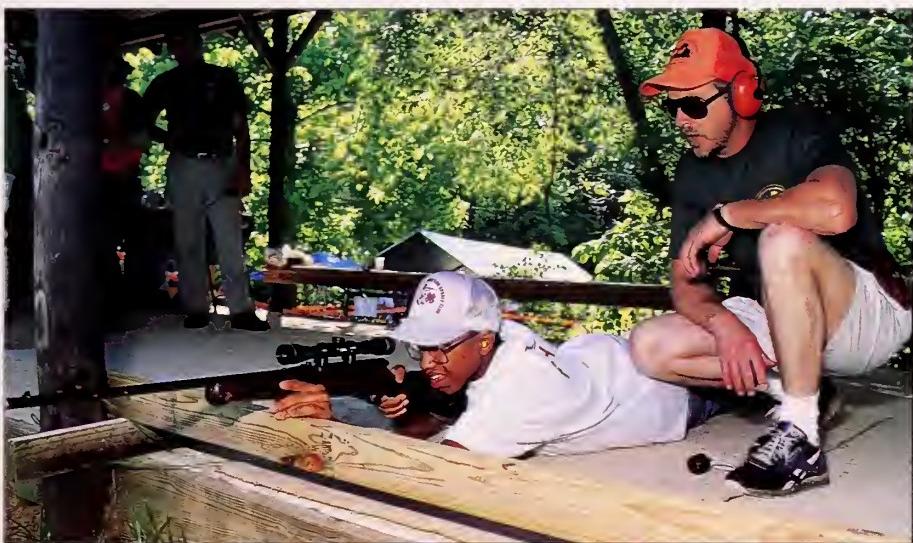
These are all critical to success in the outdoors. There is often no one in the field with you to cheer you on or to let you know that you are about to do something wrong. As a hunter you are often on your own, and you have to be your best.

Why do we need this program today? Because Hunter Education is one of the most reliable settings in which to learn solid hunter ethics. In the past, many of us were fortunate enough to start hunting at an early age. We could learn the basics of hunting ethics and hunting safety on a hunt with dad or granddad. Hunter education does not replace the training given by family members, but it certainly provides an additional method to bequeath Virginia's outdoor traditions to future generations.

The urge to go afield is as strong as ever, but now more and more people are approaching the sport with education and skills learned in the classroom, before they ever venture into the woods. Even though hunting is statistically safer per 100,000 participants than golf, ten-

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is able to offer hunter education classes to more than 25,000 people around the state each year. There is only one explanation for why we are able to do this: A very large group of men and women who give freely of their time and knowledge as volunteer instructors. This group of 1,400 individuals is what makes our hunter education program work; it's what makes it such an overwhelming success. I could see it in the faces of the instructors who worked in May, as well as those who guided their teams through the championship competition. Proud and assured, they worked with the enthusiastic youngsters at Holiday Lake.

We want to congratulate all who participated in the Hunter Education Championships; the volunteers, the law enforcement personnel, the competing youngsters, their families who supported their competitive efforts, as well as everyone else involved. Students that complete this competition and other hunter education events are becoming the very best in the outdoors they can be. We wish you many enjoyable and rewarding outdoor experiences. □



VDGIF sponsors a Hunter Education Championship each year where youths show off their honed sportsman skills, participating in shotgun, archery, orienteering, rifle, and other events. Page 3: The hunter education team from Augusta County has a history of bringing home top scores from the championship every year. Top left: The Russell County team displays its enthusiasm at this year's event. Above: Hunter Education Instructor Rob Zepp assists a member of the Nottoway County team on the .22 caliber rifle event at the Championships.

Shotgun blasts echoed through the rolling piedmont near Appomattox and were punctuated with the pop of .22s, and if you listened carefully, you could hear the whoosh of hundreds of arrows finding their mark through the lush green woodlands.

The commotion would have sounded like serious trouble had it not been for the occasional joyous shouts of one of the 123 youngsters participating in the annual Hunter Education Championships at Holiday Lake 4-H Center near Appomattox.

The annual spring event brings together the state's best teams of hunter education students and their instructors for an intense two-day competition. Vying in two categories, juniors (14 years and under) and seniors (15-18 years old), each team member participated in five events. Under the watchful eyes of some 100 volunteer Hunter Education Instructors and game wardens who had spent the past five days setting up for the big day, the students tackled a 30-shot sporting clays course which had clay birds careening along the ground like rabbits,

and almost magically appearing out of the trees like wood ducks. The 30-shot archery course wandered down through a dense patch of woods which made the life-sized plastic targets of deer look all the more real. A three position .22 range using game targets rounded out the shooting events.

In addition, the youngsters were challenged by an orienteering course, wildlife identification, and a written examination testing their knowledge of hunter responsibility and firearms safety. A new hunter safety trail provided a hands-on test



© Dwight Duke



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Volunteers are a huge part of the success of Virginia's Hunter Education Championships and the Hunter Education Program as a whole. Hunter Education Instructors set up the event, run the event, and tear it down. They put in thousands of hours each year teaching hunter education courses in addition, and they do it all for the kids and the future of our hunting tradition.

Above left: Safety is always first when handling firearms at the Hunter Education Championships. Game warden Phil Townley instructs participants from the Powhatan County team on safety at the rifle event. *Above:* Clothespins are inserted into open actions to ensure that the guns are empty of ammunition.

Above right: Participants are allowed to watch the path of one clay bird before shooting at each station. Both instructor and student will don hearing protection once questions are answered and the shooting begins. *Right:* (Left to right) Hunter Education Instructors Tom Walters, Bill Brzeski and Luke Dennis interpret rifle scores on .22 rifle event.

of the students' ability to make safe, ethical hunting decisions in the field.

It was evident to anyone watching the earnest faces and serious attitudes of this year's Hunter Education Championships that this was a special event in their lives.



Lee Walker



© Dwight Dyke



We'd like *you* to get involved! Enroll in a hunter education course, sign your child up for any one of the nearly 30 teams throughout the state, or join the ranks of our highly dedicated Hunter Education Instructors. Contact the VDGIF office in your region of the state for more information:

Richmond
4010 W. Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23230-1104
804/367-1147

Williamsburg
5806 Mooretown Road
Williamsburg, VA 23188
804/253-7072

Forest
Rt. 6, Box 410
Forest, VA 24551
804/525-7522

Marion
Rt. 1, Box 107
Marion, VA 24354
703/783-4860

Verona
P.O. Box 996
Verona, VA 24482
540/248-9360

Fredericksburg
1320 Belman Road
Fredericksburg, VA 22401
793/899-4169

Congratulations!

This year's top teams and individual champions at the Virginia Hunter Education Championships were:

Senior Division Team Champions

1st: Powhatan

Rich Baltimore
Karl Church
Stephen Humphreys
Scott Lawson
Joey Ray

2nd: Lunenburg

Andy Austin
Jeremy Clary
Edwin Foster
Frankie Johnson

3rd: Scott

Barry Compton
Joseph Davidson
Timothy Moore
Kelly Odle
Kevin Odle
Jonathan Puckett

Junior Division Team Champions

1st: Augusta

Jason Arbogast
Matt Dubose
Doug Grimm
Jared Hemp
Dale Lunsford

2nd: Culpeper

Sandy Berry
Eric Hale
Russell Haynie
Jason Miller
Anna Richardson

3rd: Powhatan

Jason Barham
Diana Daniels
Mary Daniels
Sarah Daniels

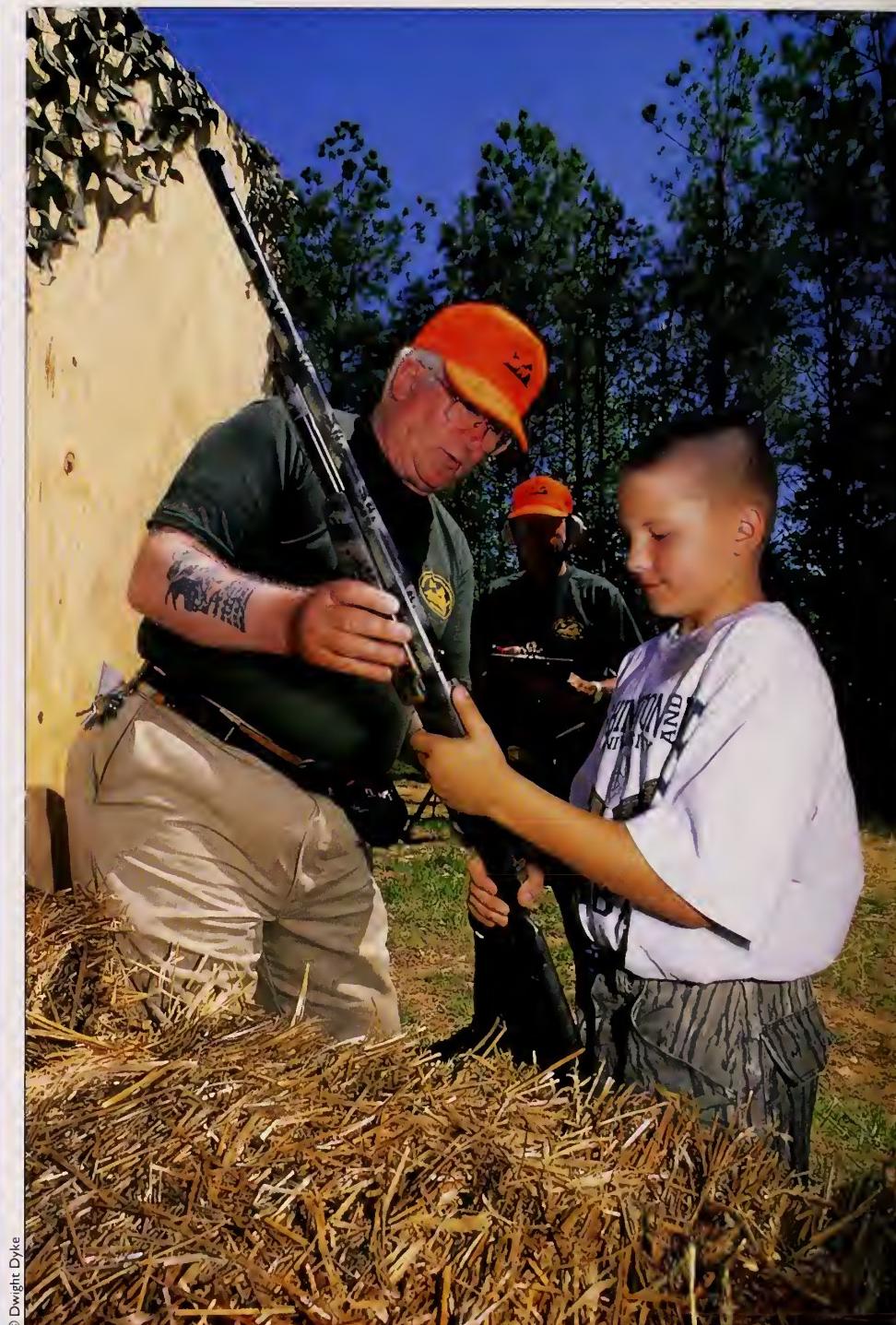
Individual Champions

Senior Division

1st: Jonathan Puckett, Scott
2nd: Rich Baltimore, Powhatan
3rd: Joey Ray, Powhatan

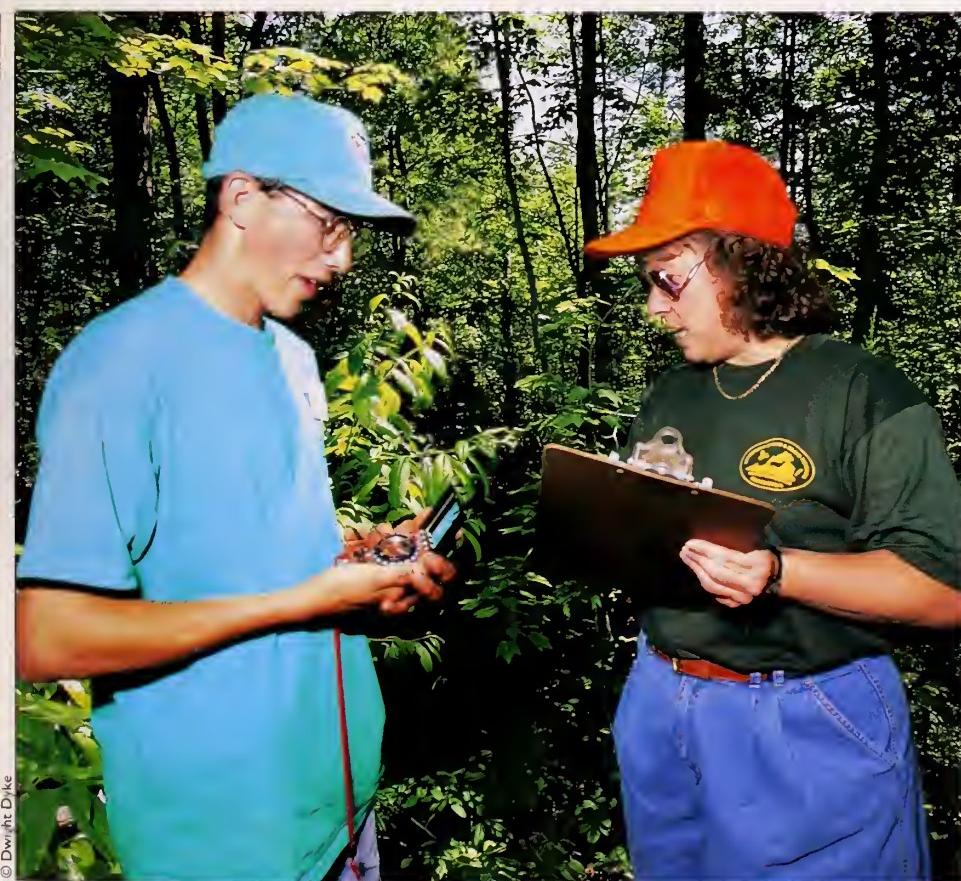
Junior Division

1st: Russell Haynie, Culpeper
2nd: Jared Hemp, Augusta
3rd: Doug Grimm, Augusta



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Above: Hunter Education Instructor Clarence Lawson instructs Rockbridge County team member in proper and safe handling of shotgun before the shooting event begins. Above right: Hunter Education Instructor Larry Daley coaches Powhatan team member on the rifle range. Right: Simone Thomas records compass readings from Scott County team member on orienteering course. Far right: Hunter Education Instructor Irving Hylton congratulates Shenandoah County team member on a good hit on the archery course where participants must gauge distance and shoot animal targets from both tree stands and ground positions.





Brook trout, photo by M. L. Giovannetti

Virginia's Year- round Trout Season

by Larry O. Mohn
Fisheries Regional Manager
& George E. Duckwall
Coldwater Hatchery Manager

As of July 1st, Virginia trout anglers officially have the year-round trout season that most had wished for. With the passing of the last opening day in March, many anglers have called to find out what the new season might mean to their trout angling opportunities. The Fisheries Division has been working on re-designing the trout stocking program to take advantage of the new season and to match the program as much as possible to the preferences expressed by trout anglers through last year's trout angler survey (see *Virginia Wildlife*, August, 1994). This article is designed to provide an overview of the new program.

The year-round season gives the Fisheries Division the opportunity

to spread out trout stocking efforts, increase trout fishing opportunity and raise more trout. Currently, over 90% of the catchable trout are stocked for the spring season from the third Saturday in March through the end of May. About one third of the total number of trout stocked for the entire year were put in the streams just for opening day. The result was a very intense stocking period where stocking trucks left the hatcheries daily and truck following had become a common occurrence. With the year-round season, trout stockings will be spread out through the fall, winter and spring. This will create many more quality fishing days for trout anglers while reducing the frequency and intensity of truck following.



© Dwight Dyke

With lower numbers of anglers on the streams the day of stocking, carry-over of trout between stockings will be much higher. We have found this to be the case with past fall stockings where few anglers fished immediately after stocking and good numbers of trout remained for months. Finally, increased distribution of trout during the fall and winter will free hatchery space, allowing hatchery personnel to increase total production.

The stocking plan included with this article outlines the stocking pe-

riods for specific streams as planned for this year by the Fisheries Division. Streams have been classified according to their ability to receive fish during various seasons. Catego-

scheduled for the October-December period with light distribution for January and February. These mid-winter stockings will likely be the most variable and be highly depen-

ceing trout before January 1st are marked (NSF) on the stocking plan.

Another feature of the new stocking program will be the 25 waters that are referred to as biweekly-stocked waters. These streams and lakes will actually be stocked once in October and November and once during January or February. However, in March, April, and May these waters will be stocked every other week and anglers will know in advance which weeks they will be stocked. These waters have been selected to be well distributed throughout the trout region while still being as close as possible to our hatcheries so that hauling costs can be contained.

Virginia trout anglers now have the opportunity to fish year-round.

Far left: Trout are stocked by VDGIF fish culturist in Southwest Virginia.

Above left: An angler hoping to land a brook trout.

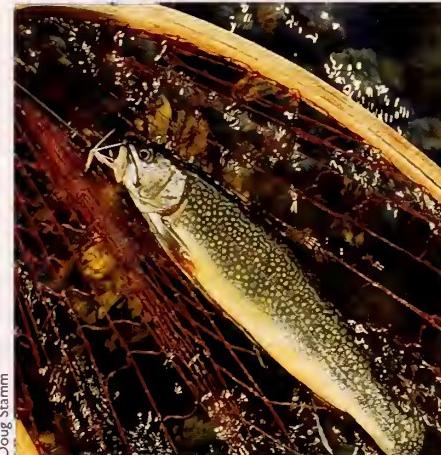
Below left: Brook trout.

Soc Clay
ry A streams represent most of those waters previously on the fall trout stocking schedule. These streams and lakes will be stocked from October 1st through the end of May with a total of eight stockings. In the past, fall stockings have often been delayed until good fall rains arrive, but in this new program, all Category A waters will be stocked in October or early November.

Category B waters are those sizable streams that often are too low to stock during dry periods or become too warm in late spring. These waters will begin receiving trout after November 15th and will be stocked five times through May 10th.

Category C waters are those very small streams that historically only received one or two stockings per year. They will now receive three stockings between November 15th and April 30th.

By looking at the stocking periods on the chart, anglers will notice that all waters continue to receive fairly frequent stockings during the March-May period when most trout have historically been stocked. Significant increases in stockings are



dent on weather. With the light stocking schedule, however, hatchery personnel should be able to stock around inclement weather in most years. These two months often provide at least a couple of weeks of spring-like weather that can be a sure cure to cabin fever if there are some well-stocked streams available.

A few streams will not receive trout stockings in the fall due primarily to potential impact to wild trout that may be spawning in these streams at that time. Streams not re-

The purpose of biweekly stockings is to accommodate anglers planning fishing trips to recently stocked waters. These waters should have good numbers of fish throughout the stocking season and be well suited to meet the needs of anglers.

A number of anglers have questioned the Department on whether stocking will continue throughout the summer months. As you can see from the chart and the above discussion, stocking will only be scheduled to occur between October 1st and May 31st. Summer weather conditions in Virginia make the ability to stock during this period very difficult due to high water temperatures and the stress placed on trout when hauling during hot weather. In fact, the Department changed the trout license requirement this past year to allow anglers to fish designated stocked trout waters from June 16th through September 30 without a trout license.

Finally, there has been much discussion concerning the potential of our hatcheries to produce more or larger trout due to the year-round

1995 Stockin

program. First of all, the size of trout will depend on the stocking season. Fall stocked trout will naturally be smaller than what anglers are accustomed to in the spring because of the shorter time available to grow the fish. In the fall, most trout stocked will be rainbows because they are spawned earlier and reach catchable size quicker than brooks and browns.

The potential is there with the year-round season to see either an increase in size or increased numbers of trout for the spring stockings because the fall and winter stockings will free hatchery production space. The proposed stocking plan outlined above requires an immediate 6 to 8% increase in production to meet stocking needs. This is a very conservative increase and as production increases adjustments in stocking numbers and frequency can be made.

It is anticipated that spring trout will show a larger average size than in the past, but anglers should be aware that environmental factors greatly affect the potential to grow fish and the size of trout will continue to vary depending on the quality of the growing season.

The Fisheries Division is looking at the new stocking plan with excitement. It is felt that this plan will provide a much higher quality trout fishing experience over a longer stocking season. This stocking plan was designed to meet the desires of the trout fishermen as expressed in the 1993 Trout Angler Survey. Because this is the first year of a new program we expect to recommend modifications and adjustments in the future. As we fine-tune this program, please continue to provide your comments and suggestions so that your trout program can provide as much recreational enjoyment as possible! □

Larry Mohn is a regional fisheries manager for the Department. He works out of the Verona office.

George Duckwall is the trout cultural supervisor for the Department. He works out of the Forest office.



Top: Trout stocking will proceed year-round in select locations.

Above: A successful angler checks the weight of her catch.

Streams	Class of Water
ALBEMARLE COUNTY	
Moormans River (N & S Forks)	B (NSF)
Sugar Hollow Reservoir	Biweekly
ALLEGHENY COUNTY	
Clifton Forge Reservoir*	A
Smith Creek*	C (NSF)
Pounding Mill Creek*	B (NSF)
Jerrys Run*	C
AMHERST COUNTY	
Davis Mill Creek*	C
Little Irish Creek*	C (NSF)
Pedlar River (Upper)*	B
Pedlar River (Lower)*	A
Piney River (S. Fk. & Proper)*	B (NSF)
AUGUSTA COUNTY	
North River (Natural Chimneys)	B
North River (Gorge)*	B
North River (Upper)*	B (NSF)
Mills Creek*	C
Braley Pond*	A
Back Creek*	B
Upper Sherando Lake*	A
Lower Sherando Lake*	A
Hearthstone Lake*	A
Falls Hollow*	C (NSF)
North River (Tail)*	DH
South River	DH
Elkhorn Lake	Biweekly
BATH COUNTY	
Back Creek	DH
Back Creek*	B
Pads Creek*	C
Jackson River (Hidden Valley)*	Biweekly
Jackson River (Rt. 623)*	A
Bullpasture River	Biweekly
Spring Run	Biweekly
Douthat Lake	+
Jackson River Special Reg.*	
BEDFORD COUNTY	
Hunting Creek*	B (NSF)
Liberty Lake	B
BLAND COUNTY	
Lick Creek	B
Laurel Fork Creek	C
Wolf Creek	A
BOTETOURT COUNTY	
Jennings Creek*	B
North Creek*	B
Middle Creek*	C
McFalls Creek*	C
Roaring Run*	B
BUCHANAN COUNTY	
Dismal River	B
Russell Fork River	C

Trout Chart



CARROLL COUNTY	A **
Crooked Creek	A
Laurel Fork Creek	A
Little Reed Island Creek	Biweekly
Lovills Creek	C
Stewarts Creek	B
CHESAPEAKE CITY	
Northwest River Park	U
CRAIG COUNTY	
Barbours Creek*	B (NSF)
North Fork Barbours Creek*	C (NSF)
Potts Creek*	Biweekly
DICKENSON COUNTY	
Frying Pan Creek	C
Russell Fork River (Haysi)	B
Pound River	Biweekly
Russell Fork (Bartlick)	Biweekly
Cranesnest River	B
FAUQUIER COUNTY	
Thompson WMA Pond	B (NSF)
FLOYD COUNTY	
Mira Fork	B (NSF)
Burkes Fork	A
Goose Creek	C
Howell Creek	B (NSF)
Little Indian Creek	B (NSF)
Little River	Biweekly
Laurel Fork	B
West Fork Little River	A
Rush Fork	C (NSF)
FRANKLIN COUNTY	
Green Creek	B
Maggadee Creek	B
Runnett Bag Creek	B
FREDERICK COUNTY	
Winchester Lake	Biweekly
Hogue Creek	B
Paddy Run*	B
Clearbrook Lake	Biweekly

GILES COUNTY	Biweekly
Big Stoney Creek*	A (NSF)
Dismal Creek*	
GRAYSON COUNTY	
Big Wilson Creek	B
Middle Fox Creek	B
Big Fox Creek*	B
Elk Creek	A
Helton Creek	C
Hales Lake*	A
GREENE COUNTY	
Lynch River	C
South River	B
HENRICO COUNTY	
Dorey Park Lake	U
HENRY COUNTY	
Smith River (Dam)	B
Smith River (Lower)	A
HIGHLAND COUNTY	
Bullpasture River	Biweekly
S. Br. Potomac River	B
LEE COUNTY	
Martins Creek	A
North Fork Powell River	A
MADISON COUNTY	
Hughes River	A
Robinson River	A
Rose River	Biweekly
MONTGOMERY COUNTY	
Craigs Creek*	B
Poverty Creek*	C
South Fork Roanoke River	Biweekly
Toms Creek	B
NELSON COUNTY	
Tye River	Biweekly
South Rockfish River	C (NSF)
PAGE COUNTY	
Cub Run*	B
Upper Passage Creek*	C
Hawksbill Creek	B
PATRICK COUNTY	
Ararat River	B
Clarks Creek	B
Dan River (Above Talbot)	B (NSF)
Dan River (Below Powerhouse)	Biweekly
South Mayo River (North Fork)	C
South Mayo River (South Fork)	C
Rockcastle Creek	B
Round Meadow Creek	C (NSF)
Poorhouse Creek	C (NSF)
PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY	
Locust Shade Park	U
Quantico MCB	B
(NSF)	
PULASKI COUNTY	
Peak Creek	B
ROANOKE COUNTY	
Glade Creek	A
Roanoke River (City)	Biweekly
Tinker Creek	A
Roanoke River (Salem)	Biweekly
ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY	
Mill Creek*	A



Brown trout, Photo by M. L. Giovannetti

Irish Creek*	B	
South River	B	
Maury River	Biweekly	
ROCKINGHAM COUNTY		
North Fork Shenandoah River	B	
German River	C	
Dry River	B	(NSF)
Silver Lake	B	
Shoemaker River	C	
Briery Lake*	A	
Hone Quarry Lake*	A	
Hone Quarry Run*	C	
Slate Lick Lake*	B	
RUSSELL COUNTY		
Big Cedar Creek	A	
SCOTT COUNTY		
Little Stoney Creek*	C	
Stock Creek	C	
Big Stoney Creek	C	
Straight Fork (Lower)	C	
Bark Camp Lake*	A	
SHENANDOAH COUNTY		
Stoney Creek	A	
Mill Creek	B	
Peters Mill Creek*	C	
Tomahawk Pond*	B	
Passage Creek*	Biweekly	
Little Passage Creek*	C	
SMYTH COUNTY		
South Fork Holston River (Lower)	Biweekly	
Staleys Creek	B	
South Fork Holston River (Gorge)*	A	
Comers Creek*	C	
Hurricane Creek*	C	
Cressy Creek*	C	
Dickey's Creek*	C	
Middle Fork Holston River (Marion)	A	
Middle Fork Holston River (Upper)	C	
TAZEWELL COUNTY		
Laurel Creek*	C	
Roaring Fork*	C	
Little Tumbling Creek	B	
Lake Witten	A	
Lincolnshire Lake	A	
WARREN COUNTY		
Happy Creek	B	
WASHINGTON COUNTY		
Whitetop Laurel (Upper)*	A	
Whitetop Laurel (Lower)*	Biweekly	
Tennessee Laurel	A	
Big Brumley Creek	C	
Valley Creek	C	
Big Tumbling Creek	A	**
Straight Branch*	C	
Bear Tree Impoundment*	A	
WISE COUNTY		
Clear Creek*	C	
High Knob Lake*	B	
Middle Fork Powell River	B	
WYTHE COUNTY		
Stoney Creek*	C	
Gullion Fork Creek*	C	
Gullion Fork Ponds	C	
West Fork Reed Creek*	C	
Cripple Creek	Biweekly	



A happy angler admires his citation-sized brown trout.

Category A: stocked once in each of the following periods:

October; November; December; January–February; March; April 1–April 20; April 20–May 10; May 10–May 30.

Category B: stocked once during each of the following periods:

November 15–December 30; January 1–February 15; February 15–March 30; April 1–April 20; April 20–May 10.

Category C: one stocking in each of the following:

November 15–December 30; February 15–March 30; April 1–April 30.

Biweekly:

October—1 stocking; November—1 stocking; December–January—1 stocking; February—1 stocking; March 1–May 30—every other week. Total of 10 stockings.

* National Forest Streams

+ Fee fishing water that should receive put & take stockings after fee fishing season

DH Delayed Harvest Water—Special Regulations apply

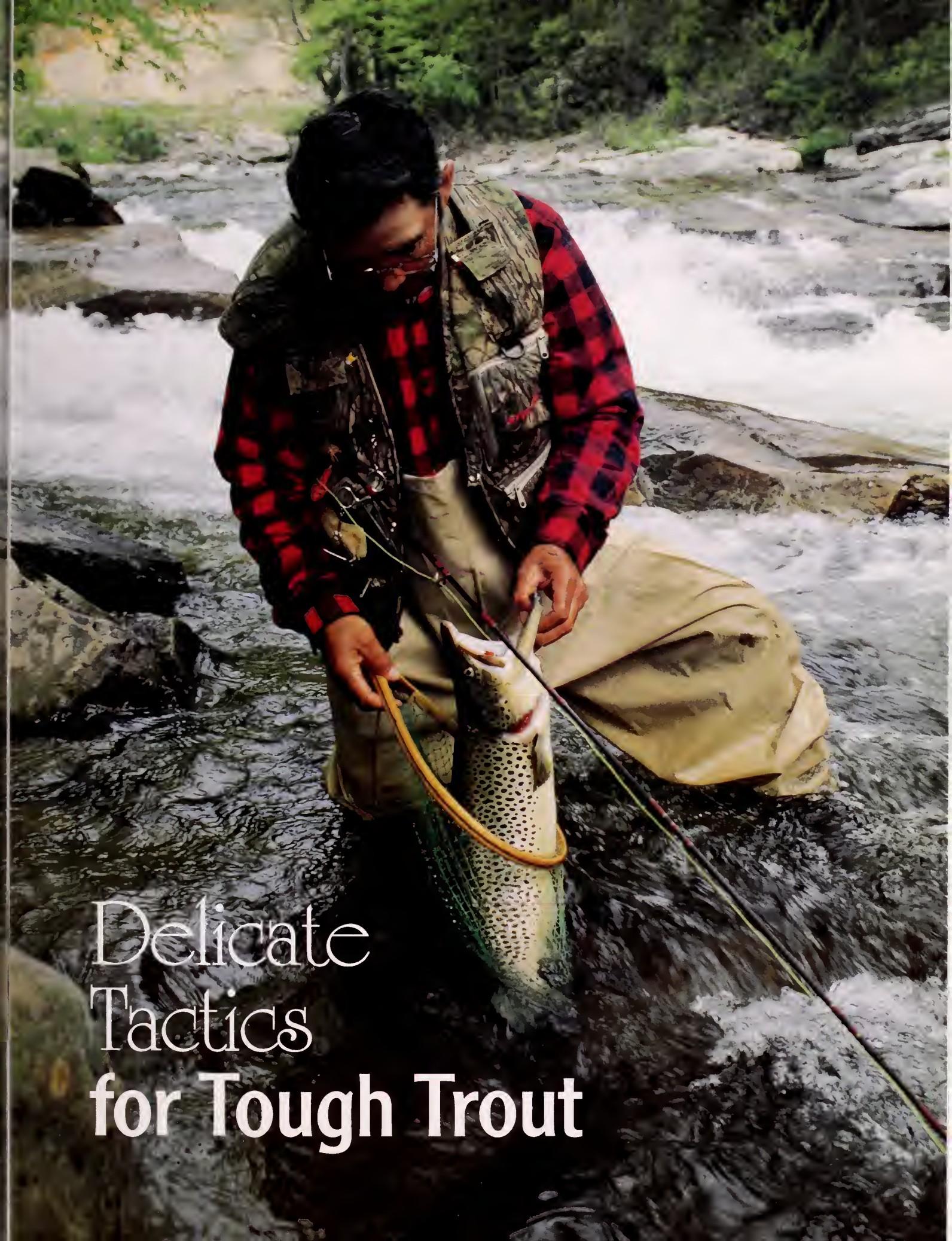
(NSF) These waters do not receive fall & early winter stockings

U Urban fishing waters, trout license required November 1 through April 30

** A section of these waters is reserved for a fee fishing area.



Rainbow trout, photo by M. L. Giovannetti

A color photograph of a man fly fishing on a rocky riverbank. He is wearing a black baseball cap, a red and black plaid shirt over a camouflage vest, and olive-green cargo pants. He is crouching on a large, light-colored rock, holding a fly rod and a trout he has just caught. The trout is speckled with dark spots. A tan fly fishing bag lies next to him on the rock. The background shows a rocky shoreline and a river flowing through a wooded area.

Delicate Tactics for Tough Trout



by Harry Murray

Late summer and early fall trout fishing in Virginia is a challenge to say the least. Prompted by the low, clear streams and the prevalence of small insects the trout become very demanding. Oh, they are definitely catchable, once the angler refines his tackle and tactics, and adapts a stealthy approach which would make the most accomplished cat burglar envious. If this sounds demanding, you're correct. But the gratification gained from

mastering these challenges is exhilarating.

Frame of mind is a powerful factor in handling these tough situations. I, personally, had a pleasant eye-opener several years ago when I started using a delicate two-weight fly rod for this type fishing.

Since I had always been attracted to late-summer trout fishing, I had become accustomed to fewer and fewer hard-caught fish as the season progressed. Well, this particular year I continued to make quite respectable catches even though the conditions appeared to be identical

to previous years. After much experimentation and numerous, lengthy discussions with angling friends, I became convinced that my unexplained good fortune had resulted from the use of my new 8-foot, two-weight fly rod.

With my confidence boosted, I tried to determine just what was happening. Obviously, the lighter line enabled me to make more delicate presentations with the small flies used at this time of the year. This, in itself, will improve an angler's catch, but there is an equally important aspect I had not anticipat-



Doug Stamm

Above: A vigorous rainbow trout finds itself in the angler's net. Below right: Angler prepares trout fly by mashing the barb down to assure the fish can be gently unhooked for a safe release.

ed. Fly rods which are properly designed to cast a two-weight line must have a very delicate tip in order to flex properly. This delicate tip enables the angler to achieve a degree of accuracy seldom equaled with stronger rods, except for a few special three-weight models.

Additionally, these delicate rods protect the gossamer leaders needed to fool the trout in these low, clear streams. I honestly cannot remember breaking a trout off on the strike, even with my finest leaders, when using my two-weight rods.

This brings up an interesting point. How fine a leader should we use in these low, clear streams? I never go any larger than 6X, and if I plan to start with size 22 flies, I'll use 7X. And yes, I'll even go to 8X with size 24 and 26 patterns.

There are many theories concerning why these fine leaders work, but I feel my friend the late Vince Marinaro had the best handle on the situation. Vince took issue with the belief that these light leaders actually produced less "drag" on the fly. He insisted that any leader lying across the mixed currents of a stream would be "pulled"—to use Vince's word—by the stream, regardless of its diameter. He countered that improved catches with fine leaders were due to the small flies sitting more naturally on the water. Regardless of the reasons, I'm firmly convinced that I take far more trout on the smallest flies by going to the lightest tippets.

Let's examine some of the refinements in tactics which can improve our fishing at this time of the year. By far, the greatest concentrations of insects around our trout streams are quite small. The chironomids, little olives and tricos are all best matched with size 20, 22 and 24 flies. The terrestrial insects are more broadly distributed than their aquatic cousins, and although I can get by with a size 18 Crowe Beetle in some cases, I often am forced to 20 and 22 McMurray Ants and Jassids. Sure, if there are some large grasshoppers or crickets around the stream we can use these in larger patterns, but these are not always present and we are compelled to use smaller flies.

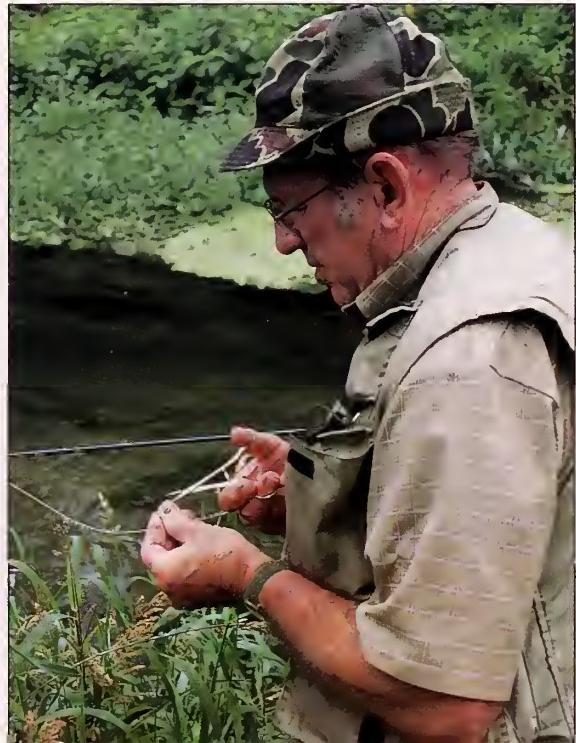
One should carefully study the water in order to locate feeding trout before cautiously moving into casting position. Since the cast needs to be delivered accurately, it is wise to measure the length of line required by false casting and holding the measure line firmly in the line hand on the delivery. However,

it is best to make these false casts several feet to the side of the trout so the flashing line and water spraying off the leader will not frighten him.

In order to prevent my fly from dragging unnaturally over the trout, I often throw extra slack into my line and leader. A "puddle cast" where the cast is aimed at a 20 to 40 degree angle above the trout and allowed to land with slack in the line is quite effective, as is a "lazy S" cast where the rod tip is wiggled from side to side as the forward cast is unfolding. *Caution:* in an attempt to get long, natural drifts, some anglers try to use exceptionally long tippets. Actually, this ends up working against them, for they are unable to deliver the fly accurately. This is a problem I often encounter in my fly fishing schools, and have found that even experienced anglers do better with tippets of 36 inches or less.

Okay, you've done everything right so far and are rewarded by a large trout rising to sip in your fly. Your strike must be firm enough to set the hook, but not strong enough to snap the fly off in his jaw. This is easier said than done with a tippet which looks as fine as a cobweb filament. I use two different strikes to help in this, my choice being determined by the direction of the current.

If I am fishing upstream, I set the hook with a "slipstrike." That is, I set the hook gently with a conventional lifting of the fly rod while holding



the fly line securely between the forefinger and thumb of the line hand. The very instant I feel resistance on the line as the hook penetrates the trout's lip I release the line from my finger and thumb. This strike assures adequate hookup, but relieves the pressure on the tippet before its breaking point is reached.

If I am fishing downstream, as I often do when there is a good olive mayfly hatch on a large stream, my strike is different because the need is different. I like to set myself up so my surface feeder is down and across from me at about a 45 degree angle. Even with a deliberate take by the trout, a conventional uplifting rod strike may fail because we are actually pulling the fly directly out of the trout's mouth, or at the very least, we're striking against the hard front part of his mouth. I get a much greater hookup rate by sharply swinging the rod parallel to the stream's surface to the side of the trout. This does two important things for me. First, the fly is now dragged across the corner of the trout's mouth where the hook has a much better chance to penetrate. Secondly, the water holds the bowing line and leader just enough to cushion the force of the strike, thereby eliminating breaking the fish off.

Now that you have your large trout securely hooked, how do you fight him into submission? Basically, you try to outsmart him rather than overpower him. I always try to get below a big trout so he has to fight both the current and me, and I get him on the reel so the slack line won't get wrapped around obstructions and allow him to break the tippet. With the reel drag set on its lightest setting and the rod at about a 90 degree angle to the trout under light pressure, I can handle almost anything he does. This subtle pressure can subdue large trout much quicker than most anglers realize. Attempting to exert excessive force upon the trout can either snap him off or alarm him into strong long runs where you lose control and eventually lose him.

A mistake often made by inexperienced anglers who hook big trout

in a stream supporting large aquatic grass beds is to point the rod tip straight up and derrick the fish up away from the grass. This is the worst thing you can do, because the more force that is applied upward, the more the trout tries to dive down. A much better ploy is to use a gentle rod pressure with the fly rod pointed at a low angle, almost parallel with the stream's surface.

Suppose this doesn't work, and the largest trout you've ever hooked heads upstream toward a jungle of aquatic grass around a submerged brush pile. What do you do? Panic! No, you still have a chance, but it will take some willpower. Obviously, you can put the screws to him and hope he'll stop. However, this seldom works and you just break him off. If you are calm enough to reduce all the pressure on the trout, often he'll stop. That's right, point the rod straight at the trout and pull some slack off the reel to give him. He may move a few feet, but apparently he feels the threat is gone and he's safe. I've experimented with this ploy hundreds of times and it works in a majority of the cases.

If you plan to release the trout, you should strive to land him as quickly as possible. I've seen many well-meaning beginners literally "fight their fish to death" and then wonder why he turns belly up when they proudly release him back to the stream.

The best method of landing a big fish quickly is to use a landing net. Several years ago, John Snyder, a master angler and close friend, tele-





phoned me and exclaimed that he had just landed a seven-pound brown trout we had been stalking all summer. His voice took on an almost embarrassed tone when I ask him how long it took him to land that huge trout on his light tackle. "A minute and a half," John practically whispered. "He bolted upstream away from me initially, but for some unexplained reason, the dumb trout reversed his tactics and raced downstream right at me; I just stuck the landing net in the water and he swam right into it."

Now, don't expect your landing net to bring all your big fish to hand this quickly, but they will definitely help you if you use them properly. Keep in mind that we are talking about fishing with leader tippets which often have a breaking strength of less than one pound by the time you consider possible abrasion and the fly-attaching knot.

When you are about to net your fish, this fine tippet is exceptionally vulnerable. In a state of excitement, it is very easy to apply too much pressure with the rod and snap the fish off literally six inches short of the net. Or, a more embarrassing sit-

*Left: Releasing a rainbow trout.
Bottom, left to right: A hook is gently removed from the mouth of the large brown trout so it can be safely released; an assortment of small ants help anglers fool the tough trout during late summer fishing; in stalking the wary trout, great caution and patience are needed, and this angler seeks to prevent spooking the fish he has spotted feeding on the surface.*

uation may occur as it did several years ago with a professional guide I had in Montana...

I had fought a huge rainbow trout almost to submission. But not quite! My guide—we'll call him Pete, to protect the guilty—was more excited at the size of the trout than I was. As he eased out into the water before me with his large net to land my trout, the fish started off on another run. Pete stabbed the landing net down into the water, aiming in front of the fish, but accidentally brushing the leader tippet with the frame of the landing net. It popped like an over-tightened banjo string. The rainbow calmly swam back into the freedom of the deep water as we both stood there in mournful silence. Pete, greatly embarrassed, apologized profusely. The real shocker came about a hour later, when for an encore, he repeated the same feat. Although Pete was normally very talkative, he was exceeding quiet the rest of the day; I suspect he was afraid I was going to tell the other guides back in town of his bad fortune—but I never did.

Okay, how *should* one land a big trout on a light leader with a landing net?

After the trout is fought into submission, the landing net is inserted into the water well ahead of the fish and held stationary. The trout is then slowly led into the net head first by gently swinging the fly rod. Only after his head has passed the frame of the net do I feel comfortable in attempting to scoop him up by gently sweeping the net under him and up in one swinging motion.

If I find myself without a landing net, I'll always try to "beach" a large trout rather than try to bring him to hand. Skilled anglers can easily land very large trout amazingly quickly in this way by following several basic axioms. After the trout has completed his powerful runs, one peruses the bank to find a gentle sloping area which feathers into the stream below where the fish is holding. One should now be downstream of the trout, have him on the reel (no slack line) and the rod should be angled so the butt of the



Harry Murray



rod is perpendicular to the stream's surface. Once the trout is within 10 feet, you simply ease your way up onto dry land and maintain a light pressure on him with the rod in the same upright angle. You now have the trout headed toward the bank and if you have not made any alarming moves—no, please don't slip and fall in with him—he will be close enough to ease him up the bank before he realizes he's in trouble.

Obviously, you don't want to roll him around on the bank or stress him in any way if you plan to release him. Rather, gently get him back into the water as quickly as possible.

Since many of our trout streams now legally require that some or all trout be returned to the stream, it is important that these fish have a reasonable chance of surviving. To assure this, let's first look at the three most common ways anglers unintentionally injure trout, and how to avoid them.

Squeezing a trout with excessive pressure to free the fly or during

landing can easily cause internal injuries from which he may not recover. Likewise, groping your fingers into the gills can induce bleeding and damage these vital organs. The easiest way to avoid these pitfalls is simply to be gentle.

The last potential lethal act of the angler is fighting the fish to death. And this is a very serious problem on the light leaders we're now discussing. Again, it is important to outsmart him and, by keeping the maximum pressure possible on your tackle, land him as quickly as possible.

When returning a large trout to the stream, he needs to be revived. Simply tossing him into the water with a bold, "Well done, worthy opponent—see you next week," will not cut it. He will not be there! Trout are much more fragile than the other fish we encounter in the Old Dominion's waters and should be handled accordingly.

The most consistent method I've found to revive a large trout when I'm returning him to the stream goes

like this. Finding water which is about a foot deep with a moderate current, I ease him into the stream using my right hand to hold him securely around the tail and my left hand under his head to stabilize him as he faces into the current. I maintain a firm grip with my right hand until I'm assured by easing my left hand away that he can retain an upright posture. If he starts tipping over on his side I tighten my grip again for a few minutes. Depending upon how exhausted the trout is, it may take a fair amount of time to revive him, but I feel we owe this to him. It once took me about 15-minutes to revive an eight-pound rainbow.

If there is ever a time when going light is right for trout, this is it. The refinements not only will give you more trout, but mastering these demanding challenges will give you rewards seldom possible in other forms of troutng. □

Harry Murray is a freelance writer who teaches fishing and fly tying in Edinburg, Virginia.



Rainbow trout is revived with care before it's released.

September's Resident Geese





Canada goose, photo by Bill Lea

"Central Virginia now boasts an amazing population of Canadas — and the birds are beginning to flourish in other parts of the state also."



by Bob Gooch

It was cool at dawn. Pleasantly so—not cold. A light camouflage jacket over an even lighter shirt was more than adequate. But the camouflage jacket was not for warmth. The early September day would warm quickly once the sun was up. I needed the camouflage pattern to deceive the sharp-eyed geese I expected to appear momentarily.

Geese in September? Early September? It had never occurred to me that I would one day be enjoying

a late summer waterfowl hunt—at least, not in Virginia. But here I was, dressed in camouflage, gripping my 1100 12-gauge Remington goose and turkey gun. The shotgun with its 30-inch full-choke barrel was loaded with steel shot. Just let those geese show up.

The camouflaged dove stool on which I hunkered down behind a small cedar seemed appropriate for September. The dove season was just a few days old. But I wasn't waiting at the edge of a cornfield. Instead I was seated on the dam that impounded a tiny stream. The pond

was to my rear. I was peering around the cedar, looking downstream, expecting the geese to appear through a break in the tree line where the stream broke through. I had taken a quick limit of three geese there the year before, and I was looking for a repeat performance.

My wait was brief. In the distance I could hear the familiar honking of geese. Getting closer—and louder!

There they were, a couple of dozen Canadas in their familiar V formation! On they came. Would my shooting be on? My heart pounded. I hadn't shot at a goose since January.

Almost overhead now!

Quickly I rose from my stool, picked up a bird in the left wing of the formation, swung past it, and hit the trigger. The goose faltered, but before I could get off a second shot it was winging toward a cottage on the far side of the pond. I didn't dare risk a shot in that direction, but my bird hit the water with a splash near the head of the pond—out of range. The rest of the flock lighted near the crippler. I wasn't particularly worried about my goose. I knew it was hit hard, and wouldn't leave the pond. I would recover it later.

For the present I was more intent on bagging another bird or two. The daily limit of three had been increased to five this year, but two or three of the big birds would satisfy me for opening day. I had promised a bird to the family who owned the pond, and I would like to put at least one in the freezer. I continued to wait, ears and eyes turned toward the skies.

A couple of questions ran through my mind as I waited. Why were so many geese in Virginia at this time of the year? I knew they were resident birds, but why hadn't they migrated north with the rest of the Canadas that visit Virginia and other southern states in the fall?

There were thousands of birds in the immediate area. They had been there all summer, raising their offspring, trading back and forth between farm ponds and the nearby

river. These were unanswered questions that continued to bug me. At best I could only speculate. And why hold a goose season in late summer? I could come up with possible answers to some of those questions, but not all of them.

"We hold the season early to avoid the migrant birds that come later," said Bob Duncan, chief of the wildlife division of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF). "While we probably have too many resident geese, the migrants are somewhat stressed at the present. We want to protect them."

My mind went back several decades and dwelled for a moment on what was possibly my first-ever sighting of Canada geese. Back during the years following World War II, I occasionally fished a pretty little Louisa County lake on a farm called Bracketts. At the time it was owned by the late Carl Nolting, an early chairman of the then Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries.

Carl, as he was fondly called by all who knew him, pretty much opened his pond to public fishing. I don't know how many bass, bluegills, and crappie I took from the fish-rich pond, but the thing I remember most was the flock of Canada geese that used the pond just about year around—resident geese. They didn't migrate north or south.

To my knowledge, no one ever hunted them.

As a hunter, my first experience with Canadas was at the famous North Carolina Lake Mattamuskeet waterfowling paradise. Later I joined the parade to Maryland's fabulous Eastern Shore shooting. Then there was the Back Bay goose hunting, now closed. And most recently, a trip to Canada's Prince Edward Island where the daily bag limit is a generous five per day.

But what about those geese I was now hunting? Where did they come from? Central Virginia now boasts an amazing population of Canadas—and the birds are beginning to flourish in other parts of the state also.

"Believe these geese got started from that flock on Carl Nolting's pond," is a favorite local conjecture.

"We hear a lot of grandfather stories," Gary Costanzo, waterfowl biologist with VDGIF, told me later. "They are part of the answer, but there are probably several origins, people just raising geese and turning them loose, for example. Another possibility goes back to days when live decoys were legal. Hunters kept geese for this purpose, but when such decoys were outlawed they simply released the birds."

Suddenly my thoughts were in-



The waterfowl hunter remains low, waiting for the quarry, "eyes and ears turned toward the skies."

terrupted by the sound of honkers again. Back to hunting. A smaller group this time. From another direction, but now circling the pond. Breathlessly I waited. Would they fly my way? Then three broke off and gave me a chance. I swung on the closest, hit the trigger, and watched with delight as it plummeted downward, hitting the pond with a splash. Out near the middle—and me with no retriever.

There are often boats of some kind on farm ponds that you can borrow for retrieving if you don't own a dog, but I have a better way. In my pickup truck was my duck and goose retrieving tool, a medium-weight spinning rod and reel and a big crankbait. If need be I could sling that plug all the way across most ponds. A surface lure is best for this task. It's less likely to snag and easier to guide. Just toss it beyond the bird out there in the middle of the pond, work it across the bird, and you are almost sure to get a good hookup with those treble hooks. Then you simply bring your prize bird to shore. So far I've never had a bass strike as I maneuvered the lure toward the bird!

Obviously the resident geese don't migrate in the traditional way, but the local birds do tend to become restless with the first cool days of late summer. The small groups that have spent the summer on ponds tend to congregate and move from pond to pond in large flocks or gaggles.

"There are some instances where a lone migrant goose looking for a mate might select a resident bird," said Costanzo. "We tag resident geese during the summer months and occasionally a tag is recovered out of the state."

"Can a resident bird keep up with the migrants?" I asked.

"They might have trouble. The resident geese are bigger birds. They begin to break up in late winter and pair off for the breeding season. But in late July and August they begin to assemble in big flocks again."

While the resident geese are scattered pretty much all over the

state, the major populations are in the piedmont region east of Charlottesville and in Fauquier and other Northern Virginia counties, according to Gary Costanzo. "That's what our harvest reports indicate," he said.



Canada geese, photo by Garry Walter



© Dwight Dyke

While the traditional hunting methods including decoys, blinds, and retrieving dogs can be used to hunt the September geese, specialized methods are beginning to evolve. Most of them revolve around farm ponds or small lakes.

I had hunted the pond mentioned earlier often the previous season. I knew the birds would approach the pond over that dam. The only speculative factor was the time of day. From experience I knew that

early morning was probably the best time.

Patterning the birds, or establishing their flight patterns when approaching a pond will produce. You can do this even before the season opens, and often the owner of the ponds can help you. Most owners watch the birds and know what to expect from them. With a pattern established, you need only dress in camouflage and conceal yourself near the flyway. Building a blind is ideal if the landowner doesn't object. That bushy little cedar, however, has served me well.

If you haven't established a flight pattern on a new pond, one you will hunt for the first time, the dam can be used for some fast, but limited, action. Geese have to be already on the water for this to work. Get downstream of the pond using a route that won't disturb the birds. Once downstream you can work carefully and quietly upstream to

Above: The author demonstrates his retrieval device, a spinning rod and reel with a crank bait.

Right: The experienced hunter provides a lesson to a member of the next generation of sportsmen.

the dam and then ease as slowly and carefully as possible up its back side. If there is cover on the top of the dam in the form of patches of grass or weeds or small trees, use them to conceal your approach. They aren't necessary, but should allow you time for a closer look at the pond once you clear the dam.

Be ready to shoot as you top the dam. Once they see you the geese are going to explode off the water. You should be able to shoot as they take wing, and if you are lucky you may be able to take a couple of birds.

After the shooting, stay put for a couple of minutes. One of those dead birds on the water may have a mate that will circle back.

These are just a couple of methods that I have used successfully during the first two September goose seasons. There are other possibilities.

One is to take advantage of that late summer restlessness and try to

establish some flight patterns even where there are no ponds. The resident birds seem to fly favorite routes. Establish roughly the time and route the birds follow and set up a blind along it. This may last for just a week or so, but it's worth checking out. Generally, the geese are most active from the beginning of legal shooting time until the middle of the morning.

I haven't tried it, but floating streams in a canoe or johnboat during the early goose season could be productive. The birds use the rivers quite a bit. While float fishing a western piedmont stream in early September last fall, a friend and I got well within range of a flock of geese before they took wing. The season was just a few days away, but the farm pond hunting was so good I didn't get back to the river.

Unfortunately, much of the resident goose hunting is on private land, and it is not always easy to get

permission to hunt some of the best farm ponds. Other pond owners are more receptive.

One thing going for the resident goose hunter is the fact that an abundance of geese can be a problem. Like deer, they can damage crops, but probably the biggest complaint is their droppings. Yards that border on lakes and ponds can become littered with goose droppings. Landowners with such problems are more receptive to responsible hunters who appreciate the opportunity and always hunt with the landowner in mind.

The growing resident goose populations have created an exciting new hunting opportunity, one that promises to be with us for many years. The proper conduct on the part of hunters can protect that future. □

Bob Gooch is a freelance writer and frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife.



SPORTING CLAYS IN HISTORY-LAND

by Bob Gooch
photos by Dwight Dyke

We were on station number 10, the final one on the sporting clays range—the shooters, the trappers, and a couple of spectators. For the moment flying clay pigeons, tricky shots, and scores were forgotten as all eyes focused on the far side of the manicured green field that stretched well beyond the station toward a stand of rich hardwoods in the distance.

"Turkeys!" someone had exclaimed.

It couldn't be! But there they were, a trio of the dark shiny birds moving slowly across the open field seemingly oblivious of the constant sound of gunfire. They had probably come to accept it as part of their domain. Well beyond shotgun range, they certainly weren't threatened. Certainly not by target loads.

"One of the gobblers is strutting!" That comment got my attention. Then, "Phil got one Wednesday." There were hunters among the several dozen shooters scattered across the sporting clays range.

LOCATED IN THE SPRAWLING AND DENSELY POPULATED WASHINGTON SUBURBS OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA, THE SUCCESS OF THE FACILITY IS BOGGLING.

The moment of diversion lasted only briefly before all hands returned their attention to the expansive shooting range. "Trapper ready!" "Pull!" "Mark!" "Hit!" The lingo of the skeet, trap, and sporting clays range rang out in the warm May air.

"Approximately half of our shooters are also hunters," Gene Hutsky, manager of the Bull Run Public Shooting Center, confirmed later. "The rest just shoot for the pure joy of it."

Located near Centreville in Northern Virginia, the shooting center rests in the shadows of the nation's Capitol. Nearby is Manassas Park, the site of the famous Civil War Battle of Bull Run. There, well over a century ago, Confederate troops

under the command of General Pierre G. T. Beauregard turned back the Federal troops led by General Irvin McDowell and sent them high-tailing for nearby Washington, D. C. Later in the war, there was the Second Battle of Bull Run, and again General Robert E. Lee's men put the



Feds on the run, glorious moments in a losing cause.

I could almost hear the startled response of a first-time visitor to the Manassas Park Battlefield as the sound of gunfire in the distance caught his ear. "Surely not again!" But friendly fire this time came from the shooting center. No muskets and black powder, just light target loads fired from a variety of scatterguns.

"Once you pass the battlefield on your right look for Bull Run Post Office Road and follow the signs to the shooting center," Hutsky had instructed over the telephone a few days earlier. The address is Bull Run Public Shooting Center, 7700 Bull



About half the shooters at the clays range are not hunters; they just shoot "for the pure joy of it."

Run Drive, Centreville, Virginia 22020. You will also cross Bull Run, a delightful stream, as you approach the shooting center. I still cherish age-old memories of a slashing chain pickerel cracking the surface of its sparkling waters with my surface lure in its toothy mouth.

The Bull Run Public Shooting Center is a product of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority. Participating in the project are the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church, and the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun. The Center is located in Fairfax. "The Park Authority owns and operates a



number of recreational parks," said Hutsky, "but this is the only one with a shooting facility."

Located in the sprawling and densely populated Washington suburbs of Northern Virginia, the success of the facility is mind boggling. Housing subdivisions are in every direction. "It is truly a success story on recreation in the middle of a major urban area," said Department of Game and Inland Fisheries Board Member Leon McFillen who represents the Tenth District in which the Bull Run Shooting Center is located. "They have in excess of 50,000 users of this facility on an annual basis," he added.

Often overlooked is the fact that shooting practice is a sound conservation measure. It contributes to the reduction of the crippling losses in the hunting field.

The shooting center is well staffed by knowledgeable firearms people. Gene Hutsky is the manager and Rob Farmer is his assistant. Additionally there are over a dozen trappers who work on a part-time basis. They run the shoots, operate the traps, call the shots and keep the scores for tournaments.

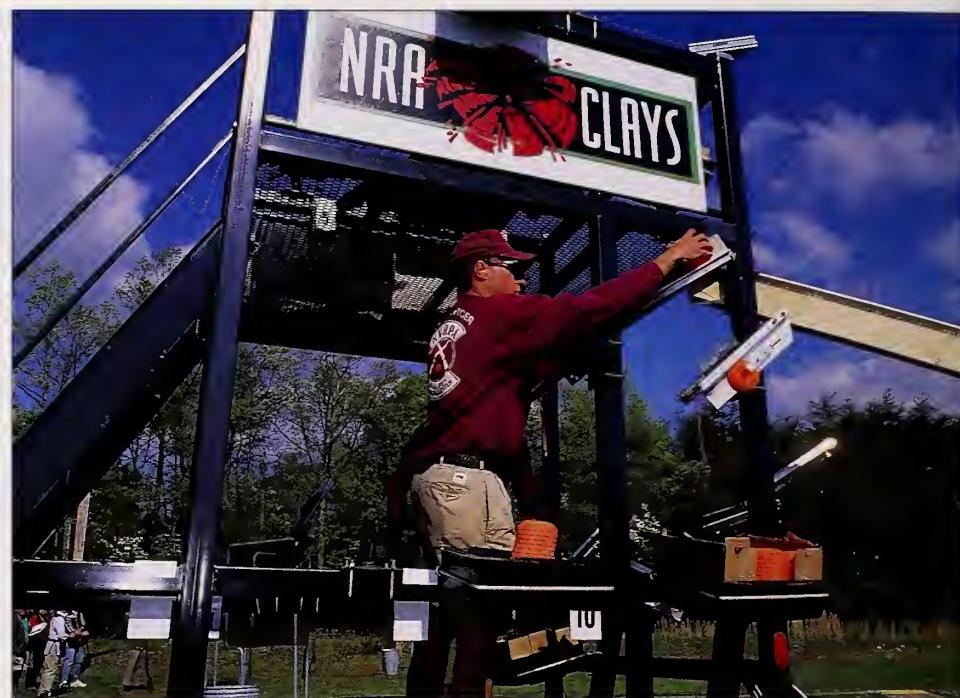
Probably in no other part of Virginia is the need for such an outlet for hunters and shooters greater, and the shooting center does a good job of providing it. And who would have ever dreamed that in crowded Northern Virginia you might also enjoy the sight of deer and turkeys as you work your way station by station along the sporting clays range? But don't count on it. Just remember it is a possibility.

Yes, there are deer, turkeys, and other game in Fairfax County, but finding a place to hunt can be a problem. "I hunt almost exclusively at Quantico," said Arthur Baker as he checked in for a round of sporting clays. "Deer and doves. Shooting here does wonders for my dove hunting." Baker is from Cincinnati, Ohio, but now lives in Lorton. The Quantico Marine Corps Reservation is convenient for him. So is the Bull Run Shooting Center where he hones his wingshooting skills.

This was an early Saturday in May and a sporting clays tournament was in progress. "We are running two tournaments today," said Hutsky. "One this morning and another in the afternoon. The 50 shots offer a variety of shooting angles that resemble actual hunting conditions."

Both morning and afternoon shooters can shoot a second round if they desire. "Gives them a chance to improve their score. We take the highest score regardless of whether it is the first or second round."

Shooters are also allowed a couple of warm-up shots that do not count in the scoring. Keith Stone of Alexandria was just completing his warm-up rounds when I talked to



him. Originally from Minnesota, Stone is a deer, duck, pheasant, and waterfowl hunter. "I used to shoot skeet and trap back in Minnesota to warm up for hunting, but got into sporting clays when it was in its early stages."

The Bull Run Public Shooting Center is open to the public, available to anyone who wants to enjoy a round of skeet, trap, or a round on the sporting clays range. Weekday hours are 4 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., but on

holidays and weekends it is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

"We get pretty busy on weekends and holidays," said Hutsky, "and I would recommend calling and making reservations then. At other times a shooter can just check in, register, and begin shooting." For reservations call 703/830-2344.

The layout of the range is well designed. "This is the old Winchester range," said Hutsky. "We've been running it about five years."



The Bull Run Public Shooting Center is open to the public, available to anyone who wants to enjoy a round of skeet, trap, or a round on the sporting clays range.

There are concrete walks for the shooters, a concrete walkway to the rear of the shooters for spectators, and where necessary concrete bunkers for the trappers. On one station, for example, the trapper may be stationed ahead of the shooter. The bunker gives him excellent protection.

Four skeet fields and nine trap fields await the shooter. They are combined for a round of sporting clays, but both skeet and trap are available. The basic round for skeet and trap is 25 targets and for sporting clays it is 50 targets.

Shotgun shells in gauges 410 through 12 are available in the modern clubhouse along with rental guns and various shooting and reloading accessories.

Currently the fees for skeet and trap are \$3.70 for 25 targets on weekdays and \$4 on holidays and weekends. The fee for the 50 sporting clays targets is \$14 and \$15. Guns rent for \$5. The fee includes clays and the services of a trapper, but not the ammunition. If you bring your own ammunition, remember that the maximum load is 12 gauge with number 7½ size shot, 3 drams of powder, and 1⅛ ounces of lead. Only factory ammunition, incidentally, may be shot in the rental guns.

Shooters must be 18 years of age or older and hold a valid driver's license, or be accompanied by an adult.

While waiting for Hutsky to register a shooter checking in a bit late, I had a chance to take in the busy clubhouse. One of the first things to catch my eyes was a display of the various clay targets the trappers throw to test the shooter's skill. There were five of them. On left was the rabbit, pretty much a standard size target, but to its right there was the tiny mini. I recalled the many times that tiny clay had baffled me on the range. Next was the battue, a clay that imitates a duck coming in, particularly a diving duck. To the right of the battue was the midi. "It's twice as fast as the standard target," said Hutsky. Finally on the far right was the standard clay pigeon.

Just below the display of targets was a list of shooters with numbers beside their names. The numbers ran from 45 up to a lone 50. Beside the score was the shooter's name. A. Peira stood alone with a 50 by his name. "Anyone breaking 45 or more clays qualifies for the elite club," said Hutsky. We have had only 13 of them over the five years we've been in operation. Mr. Peira shoots here often—sometimes all day, morning to night."

In addition to shooting supplies, there are restrooms, soft drinks, snacks, and the inevitable pot of hot coffee. A shooter can spend the day there in comfort. Outside beneath the shade of a tree, a hamburger stand awaited the shooters as they left the range.

In the basement beneath the clubhouse is an archery range. The range was not in use on that May morning, but it gets plenty of use, particularly as the bowhunting season approaches in late summer. It is also air-conditioned for comfort during the summer months when bowhunters like to begin practice for the coming season.

As you approach the door to the range a, bold "no broadheads" sign greets you. For obvious reasons, only field tips are allowed. Archers must be 14 years of age or older, or be accompanied by an adult while shooting. Other spectators must remain five feet behind the firing line.

The archery range consists of 10 lanes that are currently available at \$4 per bow with each additional shooter in a lane paying \$1. The maximum shooters per lane is four. As in the case of shotguns, bows are available for rental. The fee is \$4 per bow.

Most of us can stand some wingshooting instruction, someone to iron out the reasons for our missed shots, often little habits that have been with us for years. This need has not been overlooked by Gene Hutsky. John Alexander of Flint Hill, Virginia, is available for shooting instruction.

I live in a rural section of Virginia where sightings of deer, turkeys, and other game are a fairly common sight and finding a place to shoot is no problem. Fairfax County is at the other extreme, one of the most densely populated regions of America. The fact that a modern shooting facility is so convenient to the thousands of hunters and shooters who live in that metropolitan setting is heartening. It says that despite our rapid growth in population there is hope for the future of shooting. And we'd seen just that morning that deer, turkeys, and other wildlife, can live on the very heels of modern civilization.

I left feeling good about the Bull Run Public Shooting Center and the region it serves. □

Bob Gooch is an outdoor columnist and has authored many books on hunting and fishing. He lives in Troy, near Charlottesville.



This kind of an active, modern shooting range, in Fairfax County, shows that sport shooting remains a serious outdoor activity for many, and will continue to be so into the future.

Hudgins Rest

Forty years ago, Mauerertown resident Garland Hudgins bought a piece of land fronting the Shenandoah River. Today, as the result of a conservation easement donation to the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF), that .321 acres of land will provide the first-of-its-kind and much-needed rest stop for weary anglers and canoeists who might otherwise be tempted to trespass on private property while floating the river.

It's an innovative idea, and one that hopefully will serve as a model to reduce the tension between river-front property owners and recreational boaters looking for a place to pull up on shore. As an added plus of such an arrangement, landowners can turn over the responsibility for small areas on their property to VDGIF, and it will maintain the area for the public, while posting the rest of the land.

The cooperative spirit evident in such an agreement appears to continue beyond the initial easement. At "Hudgins Rest," for example, the Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River have already offered to assist VDGIF in maintaining the site.

In fact, so appreciative were the Friends of the North Fork of this gift to boaters, that Roberta A. Hinkins, president of the group, composed a poem expressing her heartfelt thanks to Garland Hudgins for his generosity of spirit toward river lovers everywhere:

Once again you lead us to uncharted waters...



William L. Woodfin, Director of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, left, and Phil Lownes, Capital Outlay Program Manager for the VDGIF, review the scene at Hudgins Rest. Photo by Sam Taff of the Valley-Herald.

The very first boaters rest in the State of Virginia.

A show of faith in those who boat the river,

A trust in those to whom this spot is consigned,

A prayer for boaters that they have a safe healthy, happy, trip on the Shenandoah.

But, when they pause here

May they find in this tiny fragment of our planet the sweet innocence of nature.

May they sense that at this time it has been ordained

That - we - mankind

Hold the whole earth in our hands,

that we must care for the blessing of life on earth

Or - give it benediction.

This asks a lot of such a tiny spot - but we ask it -

So the boaters may leave - endowed by the precious, giving hearts of Mildred and Garland Hudgins. □

1995 Virginia Big Game Contest

The 56th Annual Virginia Big Game contest is coming up! On September 9 and 10, the Western Regional Championship will be held at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds, Harrisonburg, VA, located on U.S. 11, 1.6 miles south of Exit 243 off I-81. The entry deadline is 2 p.m. Saturday, September 9. For more information, contact Boyd E. Skelton, 412 N. Main St., Bridgewater, VA 22812. Phone: 703/828-3393.

On September 23 and 24, the Eastern Regional and State Championships will be held at James Blair Middle School, 117 Ironbound Road, Williamsburg, VA. The entry deadline is 6 p.m. Saturday, September 23. For more information, contact Kenneth Pickin, President, Virginia Peninsula Sportsmen's Association, Inc., P.O. Box 1860, Williamsburg, VA. 23187-1860. Phone: 804/229-0490.

Entries of white-tailed deer, black bear, and wild turkey must have been bagged in Virginia with a legal sporting firearm or bow during the 1994-95 hunting season. Each entry must be accompanied by its big game check tag. □



Safety

by Col. William Antozzi, Boating Safety Officer

ot many hurricanes hit Virginia, but storms do, and some storms are almost as damaging as hurricanes. Boaters should not become indifferent to the potential for hurricanes because they can happen here and when they do, the results can be devastating. Unlike tornadoes, which can pop-up in a very short time, there is usually some advance warning when a hurricane is on its way. When that warning is received, there may be insufficient time to prepare for the onslaught unless boaters have planned ahead.

The 1995 hurricane season is June 1 through November 30. If the predictions of a leading hurricane expert are on the mark, boat owners should waste no time preparing a plan of action to secure their vessels, advises BOAT/U.S. (Boat Owners Association of The United States).

Dr. William Gray of Colorado State University predicts that this year's hurricane season could produce more storms than any since 1961. As many as 10 tropical storms, six of which may develop into hurricanes, could occur.

Boats are especially vulnerable to hurricane forces—wind and high water—even dozens of miles from the eye of a storm. But the probability of damage can be reduced considerably with preparation. Here's what boat owners should do now:

- Go shopping for the supplies you'll need to secure your boat extra lines, chafe protection, fenders, anchors, swivels, shackles, duct tape and port plugs. As a hurricane approach-

Active Hurricane Season Predicted



Taping glass windows is key in preparing for a storm with extremely high winds.

© Dwight Dyke

es, these essential items are usually in short supply.

- Storage ashore is generally the best protection, but if you won't be able to take your boat out of the water, find a snug harbor to which you can move it. Make a "dry run" on the route you'll use to get there.

If a hurricane is headed your way, here's what to do:

- Use duct tape and plugs to seal hatches, ports, windows, doors and vents.
- At a dock, make the lines as long as possible, add the extra chafe

protection, set the extra anchors and install the extra fenders.

- Take electronics, other valuable equipment and important documents off the boat.
- Finally, GO HOME! No one should stay aboard a boat during a hurricane.

For a free copy of a BOAT/U.S. guide to preparing boats for a hurricane, call 1-800-274-4877. For the latest official hurricane advisories from the National Hurricane Center, call 1-900-933-2628. Calls cost 98 cents a minute and average three minutes.

Habitat

by Nancy Hugo

Hedgerows

We usually think of hedges as keeping things out, but hedges also bring things in—especially if they're allowed to grow into productive, wildlife friendly hedgerows. Hedgerows are tangles of wild vines, shrubs, and small trees that skirt woodlands, divide fields, and follow fence lines. To eyes accustomed to clipped privet hedges, a hedgerow of blackberry, wild cherry, sumac, and dogwood may look ragged, but ragged is in the eyes of the beholder. To a bird using it for food, cover, and nesting, a hedgerow is a thing of beauty.

Hedgerows are particularly useful as wildlife travel corridors—connecting habitats that would otherwise be isolated. They offer refuge to insects and reptiles as well as small mammals and birds, and, because the best of them are composed of a variety of plant species, hedgerows provide a wide variety of wildlife foods over a long period of time. Write the authors of the British book *Hedgerow*: "The hedge-row is a highly developed natural system. The greater the tangle of growth, the richer the life pattern within it."

Wildlife managers have long known the value of hedgerows, particularly for quail and rabbits, but land use planners are jumping on the bandwagon. They're emphasizing hedgerows' value in preserving "a sense of countryside" even in suburbia, and one can only hope their influence will spread wide and quickly. I watched developers of an otherwise well-planned subdivision

in my neighborhood take down a thick hedgerow of native naturalized plants surrounding the property in order to put up a privacy fence. The fence probably cost a bundle, screened the neighborhood from the road no better than the hedgerow had, and wiped out a fantastic wildlife corridor.

In addition to leaving hedgerows where they stand, we can try to increase their number and interconnection by letting more hedgerows "come up" in median strips, along the edges of yards, in hard-to-mow areas, between fields. There they not only provide wildlife food and shelter, they provide windbreaks, stabilize soil, and retain moisture. Hedgerows have also been called "the cheapest insecticide," because the birds they harbor eat so many insects.

Creating a hedgerow is usually more a matter of not doing than of doing. Not mowing the perimeter of a lawn or field, for example, can begin the process of succession that leads to shrubby hedgerow growth. Once you've established it, to maintain your hedgerow as a hedgerow you'll need to occasionally take out trees like sweetgums that would eventually grow to forest size and shade out your hedgerow species. Fast-growing weed trees like Ailanthus (tree-of-heaven) should also be removed. The Virginia Native Plant Society publishes a list of some of the best trees, shrubs, and wildflowers for hedgerows in its pamphlet "Hedgerows and Other Corners of Natural Diversity in Our Country-

side and Gardens." A key identifies some of the best plants for providing cover and nesting sites, for providing winter wildlife food, for attracting butterflies and hummingbirds. (Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Piedmont Chapter, VNPS, P.O. Box 336, The Plains, VA 22171).

Eric Thomas and John T. White's book *Hedgerow* (William Morrow and Co., 1980) is also a must-read for anyone seriously interested in hedgerows. It's hard to find (try inter-library loan) but worth the search because it not only traces the history of England's famous hedgerows but also describes the intricate web of life through which hedgerows have historically sustained not just wildlife but generations of people—providing fuel, fodder, food, and medicinal herbs. It describes the source of the word hedge—from "haga" for the fruit of the hawthorn, the first tree from which English "living hedges" were made, and it defines terms like hedge-popping (a children's game that involved flushing birds out of hedges and shooting them as they rose) and hedgebreaker (the term for anyone caught wantonly destroying a hedge.) In a day when these British enclosures were carefully maintained and tight enough to hold cattle, hedgebreaking was such a serious offense that anyone found guilty of it was subject to the severest penalty—"transportation for life," presumably to a prison colony like Australia. And that was just for putting a hole in a hedge. □

Recipes

By Joan Cone

It's August—Let's Eat Croakers

Virginia's Chesapeake Bay has been home to multitudes of croakers for many thousands of years. Fun to catch and good to eat, these noisy fish—they do make a croaking sound with their air bladders—present an interesting challenge to the cook. This is because the head end is much wider than the tail portion. Thus, if you cook one end just right you tend to undercook or overcook the other.

The answer is to fillet your croakers and produce fish portions of approximately equal thickness. The larger the croaker, the easier the filleting, yet even relatively small fish can be handled.

MENU

- Garden Vegetable Dip
- Busy Day Croaker
- Yellow Squash Fritters
- Stuffed Tomato Salad
- Peach Trifle

Garden Vegetable Dip

- 1 package (8 ounces) light cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup tomato ketchup
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon white pepper
- 1/2 cup finely grated carrot
- 1/2 cup finely chopped celery
- 1/4 cup finely chopped green pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon instant onion powder
- Assorted fresh vegetables or crackers

In small bowl, blend first 5 ingredients until thoroughly combined. Stir in carrot, celery, green pepper and onion powder. Cover; chill. Serve with vegetables or crackers. Makes 2 1/2 cups.

Busy Day Croaker

2 pounds croaker fillets, skinned

- 1 cup sour cream
- 2 tablespoons dry onion soup mix
- 1 cup fine dry bread crumbs
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 1/4 cup cooking oil

Thaw fish if frozen. Cut fillets into serving-size portions. Combine sour cream and onion soup mix. Combine bread crumbs, Parmesan cheese, parsley and paprika. Dip fish in sour cream mixture and roll in bread crumb mixture. Place fish in a single layer on a well-greased baking dish, approximately 12 x 8 x 2-inches. Pour cooking oil over fish. Bake in an extremely hot oven, 500° for 12 to 15 minutes or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork. Makes 6 servings.

Yellow Squash Fritters

- 1 1/4 cups self-rising flour
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 3 cups coarsely grated yellow squash
- 1/2 medium onion, coarsely grated
- Pepper to taste

Combine first 6 ingredients, beating until smooth. Stir in squash and onion; add pepper if desired. Drop mixture by tablespoonfuls into a hot, greased skillet. Cook until golden brown, turning once. Drain on paper towels. Makes about 2 dozen.

Stuffed Tomato Salad

- 4 tomatoes
- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried basil
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 ounces mozzarella cheese, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped walnuts
- Lettuce leaves

Remove stem ends from tomatoes. Remove pulp with spoon, cutting into 1/2-inch dice; reserve tomato shells. Whisk together vinegar and oil; mix in basil, garlic powder, salt and pepper. Toss with tomato pieces and cheese. Cover; chill to blend flavors, 1 to 2 hours. Mix in walnuts and fill tomato shells. Serve on lettuce leaves.

Peach Trifle

- 1 package (3 ounces) vanilla pudding mix
- 1 3/4 cups milk
- 1 container (12 ounces) frozen whipped topping, thawed and divided
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 5 fresh peaches, peeled and sliced (about 2 pounds)
- 1 (16 ounce) frozen pound cake loaf, thawed and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1/2 cup orange juice

Combine pudding mix and milk in saucepan; bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and let cool. Fold in half of whipped topping. Sprinkle sugar over peaches; toss gently and set aside. Place half of cake in bottom of 16-cup trifle bowl and drizzle with half of orange juice. Arrange half of peaches over cake and top with pudding mixture. Repeat layers. Spread remaining whipped topping on top. Cover and chill at least 2 hours. Makes 14 to 16 servings. □

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1995-1996

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